



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/831,355	05/14/2001	Michael Matthew Hourn	A-7419	6997

20741 7590 10/01/2003
HOFFMAN WASSON & GITLER
2361 JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGHWAY
SUITE 522
ARLINGTON, VA 22202

EXAMINER

ANDREWS, MELVYN J

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

1742

DATE MAILED: 10/01/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/831,355

Applicant(s)

HOURN ET AL.

Examiner

Melvyn J. Andrews

Art Unit

1742

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 08 July 2003.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-24 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-24 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) 11.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s) _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other:

DETAILED ACTION

The text of those sections of Title 35, U.S. Code not included in this action can be found in a prior Office action.

This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

Claims 1 to 24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bakshani et al (US 4,738,718) in view of Hourn et al (US 5,993,635) and Nunez et al (4,654,079). Bakshani et al discloses a gold recovery pretreatment process comprising forming a slurry of refractory sulfidic gold-containing ore and subjecting the aqueous slurry in the presence of an alkaline material to an oxidation step, the alkaline agent may be lime (CaO) (col.3, lines 3 to 14) which is equivalent to the claimed limitation that "the leaching being initiated under alkaline conditions" which appears to be the crux of the claimed process as argued. Bakshani et al further discloses that typically, acid is formed in the oxidation process within the autoclave to cause the slurry pH to be lowered to about pH 5.0 (col.4, lines 55 to 57) afterwards the pH of the slurry is adjusted by the addition of lime to adjust the pH to about 10. (col.5, lines 1 to 21) which

Art Unit: 1742

suggests a pH of about 7 to about 12 or a pH of about 7 to about 9 as in Claims 12, 13 and 23. Bakshani et al does not disclose treating the slurry at atmospheric pressure and at low temperature in an open tank reactor but these features are conventional as evidenced by Hourn et al (col. 12, lines 15 to 40) which would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to use the Hourn et al autoclave to treat the Bakshani et al slurry in order to process sulphide mineral compositions to recover precious metals such as gold, platinum and silver (col.12, lines 61 to 63).

With respect to the amendment to claim 1 "and subjecting the leached material to a cyanide leaching step to recover metals" this feature is suggested by Nunez which discloses a current process for obtaining gold consists of crushing and grinding until 75% by weight with a particle size below 40 microns is reached , the ground ore is previously conditioned with lime followed with a dilute sodium cyanide solution it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to treat ground ore with lime then cyanide since Nunez regards this sequence as conventional.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 22 and 24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Bakshani et al (US 4,738,718) or Hourn et al (US 5,993,635). The gold recovered by leaching ore as taught by Bakshani et al and/or Hourn et al anticipates or renders obvious the claimed gold which is produced by essentially the same steps as disclosed by Bakshani et al on combination with Hourn . *In re Fitzgerald* , 205 USPQ 594

Claims 22 and 24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Simmons (US 5,536,480) or Australian Patent No.73192/87. The gold recovered by leaching ore as taught by Simmons and/or the Australian patent anticipates or renders obvious the claimed gold which is produced by essentially the same steps as disclosed by Simmons in combination with the Australian patent. *In re Fitzgerald* 205 USPQ 594

Applicants have not presented any arguments to overcome this rejection.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall contain a written description of the invention, and of the manner and process of making and using it, in such full, clear, concise, and exact terms as to enable any person skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and use the same and shall set forth the best mode contemplated by the inventor of carrying out his invention.

Claims 1 to 24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the relevant art that the inventor(s), at the time the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention. In Claims 1,17 and 23

Art Unit: 1742


the expression "the leaching being initiated under alkaline conditions" is new matter since this procedure is not clearly defined in the specification or claims and the as now defined alkaline conditions is to include a pH within the range of between about 7 to about 12 but the lower limit that is a pH of 7 is not considered to be basic but neutral.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Melvyn J. Andrews whose telephone number is 703-308-3739. The examiner can normally be reached on 8:00A.M. to 4:30 P.M..

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Roy V King can be reached on 703-308-1146. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (703) 872-9306.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is 703-308-0651.


MELVYN ANDREWS
PRIMARY EXAMINER

mja
September 30, 2003